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Circular No. 10 – Naturalization Records

The Naturalization Act of 1802 established the three-part naturalization process which remains in effect today. Aliens must declare their intention to become a citizen, observe a required residence period, and then petition an authorized court for admission to citizenship. In character, this process is both judicial (occurring before and by order of a court) and administrative (being under the supervision of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice).

Initially, the alien files a Declaration of Intention with an authorized court, indicating his or her intention to become a citizen, to renounce all allegiance to any foreign state, and to renounce any foreign title or order of nobility. Then, at least two years after making this declaration (but, after 1906, no more than seven years later), an alien who has been a resident of the United States for at least five years may petition the court for admission to citizenship (since 1941, the requirements to file a Declaration of Intention has been abolished and the residency record shortened for the spouses of citizens). This Petition includes both the applicant's oath and the affidavits of two witnesses who attest to the residency and good character of the petitioner. Finally, if the petition is accepted, the court issues an order admitting the individual to citizenship.

The Basic Naturalization Act of 1906 (passed June 29 and effective October 1) established the Immigration and Naturalization Service, more precisely defined administrative procedures, and provided for federal supervision over the naturalization process. Prior to that time, naturalization could occur in any federal court or any state court of record operating only under the very general requirements of federal law. Since October, 1906, uniform and considerably more detailed requirements for naturalization, including the form and contents of related records, have been specified by federal statute and promulgated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Researchers using naturalization records will find relatively few entries for women. From 1866 until the passage of the Married Woman's Act in 1922, citizenship was automatically conferred on the wife of any male citizen. Since then, women have been required to be naturalized in their own right.

Naturalization Records

The declarations, oaths, and petitions are mainly loose papers that were filed with the court. As their name implies, the declarations represent a written statement of someone's desire to become a U.S. citizen. The oaths are statements whereby those intending to become U.S. citizens renounce any allegiance to other countries or sovereigns.

Other oaths are from individuals who swear that they have known the petitioner for a given period of time and can vouch for his or her good character. Finally, the petitions from aspiring citizens are formal requests to be granted status after all prerequisites have been met. These materials are arranged chronologically. When all of the documents are bound together, they are filed under the most recent date shown.



Declarations of Intention

Prior to 1907, the declarations of intention provide date, name of individual, and country of origin. After 1906, the forms give in addition such facts as age, occupation, race, complexion, height, weight, color of hair and eyes, distinctive marks, date of birth, residence, date and place of embarkation, means of transportation to the U.S., port of arrival, and oath. Alphabetical name indexes are at the front of each volume.

Petition and Record

Before 1907, the petition and record offers only date, name of individual, country of origin, names of witnesses, and oath. After 1906, the forms also provide residence, occupation, date and place of birth, date and place of emigration, means of travel to U.S., date and place of immigration, date and place declaration filed, names of spouse and children, their places of birth and residence, length of time in Michigan, names of witnesses, plus their occupations and residence. Alphabetical name indexes are at the front of each volume.

Court Orders

The court orders are documents prepared twice a year that identify those persons who have qualified for U.S. citizenship. These papers are the judge's order granting petitions for naturalization, and simply list date and name of individual.

Certificates of Naturalization

Certificates of naturalization give number, name, age, date of transaction, place and date where declaration of intention filed, date and place where petition filed, date and place where order filed, and residence of each.

County	Inclusive Dates	Record Group	Online Index
Allegan	1850-1956	94-342	X
Alpena	1871-1982	2003-61	X
Antrim	1863-1955	2002-60	X
Arenac	1883-1956	99-10	
Bay	1858-1966	94-417	X
Barry	1840-1958	2004-68	
Calhoun	1892-1980	91-270	
Charlevoix	1855-1956	90-173	
Chippewa	1847-1985	96-217	X
Clare	1872-1965	99-77	X
Clinton	1850-1964	2005-20	
Crawford	1879-1964	2002-40	X
Delta	1866-1955	98-50	X
Dickinson	1891-1970	96-218	X
Eaton	1915-1929	80-120	X
Eaton	1836-1959	2002-17	
Genesee	1838-1931	81-44	
Genesee	1931-1965	90-296	
Gladwin	1874-1964	81-56	

County	Inclusive Dates	Record Group	Online Index
Gogebic	1887-1980	90-182	
Grand Traverse	1853-1980	99-49	X
Gratiot	1857-1956	94-341	
Hillsdale	1846-1930	85-09	
Huron	1864-1961	96-227	X
Ingham	1845-1931	83-52	
Ingham	1896-1985	90-168	
Ionia	1835-1959	85-32	
Iosco	1859-1974	94-378	X
Iron	1881-1956	96-216	X
Isabella	1861-1965	2004-71	
Kalamazoo	1840-1967	94-343	
Kent	1860-1929	89-28	X
Keweenaw	1862-1954	96-219	
Lake	1872-1955	2000-71	X
Lapeer	1840-1956	98-63	X
Lenawee	1853-1963	2002-26	X
Luce	1887-1929	82-116	
Luce	1929-1956	94-379	
Mackinac	1821-1964	98-48	X
Macomb	1820-1983	97-78	X
Manitou	1870-1894	75-70	
Marquette	1852-1971	89-467	X
Mason	1870-1969	99-25	X
Mecosta	1859-1956	90-274	
Monroe	1849-1929	84-87	
Montcalm	1852-1955	82-134	
Montmorency	1931-1954	2003-12	
Muskegon	1850-1941	84-119	
Muskegon	1929-1980	94-302	
Newaygo	1855-1966	99-82	X
Oakland	1843-1987	2004-14	
Ontonagon	1851-1953	2002-61	X
Otsego	1879-1956	2000-04	X
Ottawa	1852-1962	2000-72	X
Saginaw	1852-1966	89-77	
Saint Clair	1843-1982	94-301	X
Saint Joseph	1854-1967	2005-36	
Sanilac	1850-1964	94-267	X
Tuscola	1857-1965	90-70	
Van Buren	1887-1967	2005-24	
Washtenaw	1830-1985	90-278	
Washtenaw	1830-1985	96-226	
Wayne	1837-1935, 1942	85-36	

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In addition to county circuit courts, naturalization papers could also be filed with the Federal District Courts in Michigan. Unless of recent origin, these records can be found at the Great Lakes Regional Branch of the National Archives, 7358 South Pulaski Road, Chicago, IL 60629, telephone (773) 948-9001. At this repository one can find the following Michigan materials:

Eastern District

Detroit

Indexes: 1837-1906

Declarations of Intention: 1837-1964

Petitions: 1837-1959

Western District

Marquette

Indexes: 1887-1915

Declarations of Intention: 1887-1909

Petitions: 1888-1915

Grand Rapids

Indexes: 1907-1930

Declarations of Intention: 1907-1927

Petitions: 1907-1930

